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of the supply of these nuts for all Burma. The trees bearing them are tall slender palms (*Areca Catechu*), which flourish in moist mountain valleys where they are shaded by larger trees. The nuts grow in clusters just below the crown of leaves. A tree may produce as many as four hundred nuts a year, which are sold in baskets at three or four rupees a basket. There are several gardens that number these palms by the thousands and many others by the hundreds. 245 [435]

Plantain gardens are cultivated on the bottom-lands near the rivers, where there are rich alluvial deposits. Plantains or bananas, of which many varieties exist, are comprised in the genus *Musa*. The stem grows from four to fifteen feet in height and produces sprouts, which are set out at the end of the rainy season and begin to bear by the next year. The new plants send out sprouts in their turn, these growing from the sides of the herb and continuing its life indefinitely. Some varieties of the plantain in the hill-country bear very delicious fruit, which I have almost never seen on the plains. As far as I know it is raised for home consumption, although it may be sold in a few cases to Burman and Shan traders for a small price.

In the Toungoo and Moulmein districts oranges are extensively grown. The groves are along the well-watered valleys, and the fruit is ripe in late September and in October. Nothing has been done, so far as I am aware, to improve the varieties, but a ready market is open to the fruit produced. The Karens bring the supply down to Toungoo in dugouts, and sell it to traders on the river bank at prices varying from one to three or four rupees per hundred, according to the size and quality of the fruit.

A few years ago coffee was widely planted in the Toungoo district; but a blight ruined the greater part of the groves, and the industry ceased to develop. A little is still raised here and there, but it is of an inferior grade.

Tobacco is grown along the sandy banks of the rivers, not in large quantities but sufficient for home consumption and petty trading. It is cured in the most primitive way and consumed in many forms. 249 ●

I have been informed that in the early days the Karen trained the vines of the betel leaf creeper (*Piper Betel*) to run up a certain kind of rough-barked tree, which a few vines would completely cover with their glossy green foliage, supplying a large crop of leaves and thereby a considerable income for the possessor of such 245

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No one can presume to predict the outcome of the present unsettled conditions. We can only hope that better days are in store for the cultivators, whether Burman or Karen.

If, before the war, a man owned his field and cattle without encumbrance or other debts, he could till some twenty acres and make a comfortable living for himself and family. If, however, he was under the necessity of borrowing money and hiring men and cattle, he could hardly keep his head above water.

There are some Karens who own large fields. They may have acquired them by careful management, by purchase, or by foreclosing loans. Many of these proprietors make a business of hiring out their fields to men who cultivate them at a rental of from ten to fifteen baskets of paddy per acre, the cultivator supplying his own materials and help. In case the owner has oxen, he rents them at the usual price. In addition, he usually makes a loan of cash to his tenant, on which he gets a big return, namely, a hundred baskets of paddy for the sum of fifty rupees for six months. If the tenant borrows from a money-lender, he has to pay anywhere from fifteen to fifty percent a year for it.

On the plains the cultivator is almost entirely dependent on his single crop of paddy. If high water has washed out his first settings, there is not time enough left to raise other produce after the water has disappeared. Under these circumstances they sometimes plant sesame, but it requires only a little less time to mature than paddy. The lack of water in the dry season renders cultivation impossible without extensive irrigation.

Along the river-bottoms may be found a few plantain groves, patches of tobacco, sugar-cane, or vegetables; but these are unusual sights. They may add a little to the cultivator's income. But very few persons derive their chief support from such gardens.

The Karen on the plains do not observe the old religious customs of the hill people. Many times they resort to Burmese soothsayers to prognosticate the proper times for planting, reaping, and other tasks. Not a few, however, follow the old ceremonies in greater or less part. A ceremonial similar to "theh a hku" in the hills* is observed on the plains where it is designated "mo a si." It is performed when the paddy is set out. Offerings are seldom seen along the paths in this region, but when the paddy has been sown an offering is made to "Hpi Bi Yaw" by transferring the rim of earth around a crab's burrow to the summit of the pile of

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* See ante, pp. 75, 76.